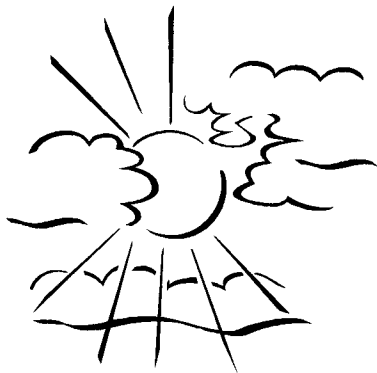


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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September 13, 2005

HOUSE PANEL PLANS AUDIT FOLLOW-UP

Members of the House Family and Children Services Committee said they plan to dog the Department of Human Services to be sure that promised improvements to the foster care system actually happen after a recent audit critical of the system's operations. But they also indicated willingness to support the department in a call for additional funding should leaders be able to show the need.

James Hennessey, director of the Children's Services Administration, said he was already working to address many of the findings in the audit, with some improvements already in place or coming shortly.

"We plan to address the root causes to the extent that we can," Mr. Hennessey said. "Where we don't understand what the root causes are, we plan to launch an investigation."

Rep. John Stahl (R-North Branch), chair of the committee, said he wanted regular reports back from the department on its progress toward implementing corrections to the problems found in the audit, but he said he was also willing to work with the department to find the resources it needs. "They might need more appropriations. They might need to be more efficient with what they have," he said.

And if the department does need more resources, he said he would be willing to work with the Appropriations Committee to find the funds.

But Committee Republicans raised concerns that prior foster care program administrators had also promised improvements, many of which have not yet happened.

"We have to have solutions. We can't just be here every two to three years saying we're going to do better," Mr. Stahl said. "You're making it sound like much of this has already been remedied. I want to make it clear that this hasn't been remedied from our point of view."

"I've sat in this committee almost five years; I've heard vision, vision, vision, vision," said Rep. Barb Vander Veen (R-Allendale). "Somebody has to get their arms around this situation. ... I want to see that progress."

"I've been hearing about solutions for years. This talks a lot about the future also," said Rep. Tom Pearce (R-Rockford). "We really need to put the department's feet to the fire and make sure these things happen."

The key point of diversion, at least between the department and Mr. Stahl, was how many caseworkers it needs.

"We should be at 15 cases per worker," Mr. Hennessey said. "We're at between 20 and 40 and that's way too high to provide the services that need to be provided."

Mr. Hennessey said the department is also short on staff to oversee contracts with private service providers.

But Mr. Stahl questioned the reasoning that led to the 15-case standard, noting that the Binsfeld Commission on Children recommended a caseload of 20 per worker. "Twenty to one was back in '96. I don't think that's appropriate now," he said. "There's technology provided to us today that can provide reports to us much, much quicker."

Mr. Hennessey admitted that there were likely improvements, particularly in using technology and data, that could be made to the current foster care system, but he said many of those projects also would require funds that are not currently available. "I don't know that we have the resources in place to deal with the automation changes that we need to," he said.

And he said there are a number of programs around the country to which Michigan could look for improvements to its own systems. "We need to look at best practices in other state and we need to look in our own state," he said.

Mr. Stahl argued against any new programs. "I'd hate to look at another program before we correct the root causes (of problems in the current program)," he said.

Mr. Hennessey said the department also needs to change the focus of foster care. "Over time what we need to do is redirect resources to the front end of our system," he said, arguing that more emphasis on earlier services would allow more children to remain in their homes or, if they are removed, to return more quickly.

"What we're really wanting to do is help the family mend itself," he said.

New state budget deal locks in spending hike

Lawmakers already have plans for new revenue

The Detroit News

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

State lawmakers are crowing about their new budget agreement with the governor. To the extent that it doesn't increase taxes or fees, they've earned bragging rights. But spending is heading in the wrong direction. Michigan's budget is divided into several funds. Attention is focused on the General Fund, which includes discretionary spending for most state departments. The General Fund agreement that legislators reached with the governor totals \$8.98 billion. That's nearly \$300 million more than this year's General Fund spending, an increase of 3.4 percent, according to an analysis by the state Senate Fiscal Agency.

It's also about \$100 million more than the governor recommended when she submitted her proposed budget early this year. General Fund spending had been on a steady decline in the last few years and now it's trending back up. Of course, the state's General Fund isn't the whole picture. State sales taxes, gasoline taxes and education property taxes fuel other parts of the budget, such as the School Aid Fund, the Transportation Fund and various other state checkbooks.

The long-term picture is that Michigan spends every penny it can get its hands on. In the last 10 years, total state appropriations increased 42 percent, while inflation increased 25 percent. To be fair, a huge chunk of these total appropriations included federal revenue. State tax revenue to all state funds during the same period increased 31 percent, according to a separate Senate Fiscal Agency analysis.

The big increase in the total state budget has been federal funds, which jumped from \$6.4 billion to \$11.6 billion from the 1995 to 2004 budget years, a rise of 80 percent, the analysis notes. In other words, Michigan is becoming more dependent on federal revenues. For the risks entailed in that kind of dependence, the state need only listen to the complaints of county and local governments that have seen their state revenue sharing payments decline because of Michigan's economic slide.

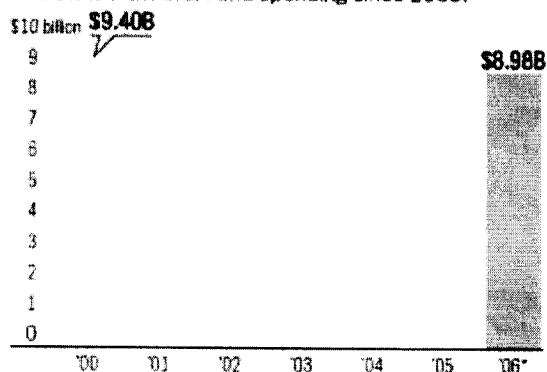
Signers of the new budget depend on earning interest income from selling off the state's tobacco settlement and hope to squeeze more tax money out of residents with more aggressive collection efforts.

Lawmakers also hope that demonstration programs to get Medicaid and welfare recipients to adopt healthier lifestyles and move into the workplace will reduce future social spending pressure on the budget. These experiments are worth trying, but they remain a gamble.

Overall, this budget shows that Michigan government is sticking with its old habit of riding the rollercoaster of the state's economy. When anticipated revenues go up -- so does spending.

Michigan's budget fund

The state's General Fund spending since 2000.



* Proposed

Source: Michigan Office of the State Budget

The Detroit News

Michigan Report

September 14, 2005

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTICE OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Conference Committee on SB 272, (Chr. Garcia, 373-2767), Senate Approps. Rm., Capitol,
1 pm

SB 272 GENERAL GOV EXECUTIVE BUDGET(Switalski)Fiscal year 2005-2006
executive budget for general government.[Full Text](#)

Conference Committee on SB 276, (Chr. Garcia, 373-2767), Senate Approps. Rm., Capitol,
2 pm

SB 276 DLEG EXECUTIVE BUDGET(Prusi)Fiscal year 2005-2006 executive budget for
the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.[Full Text](#)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Conference Committee on SB 271, (Chr. Hardiman, 373-2767), Rm. 110, Farnum, 8:30 am

SB 271 FIA EXECUTIVE BUDGET(Scott)Fiscal year 2005-2006 executive
budget for the Family Independence Agency.[Full Text](#)

122 Katrina survivors leave Fort Custer

Christine Iwan
The Enquirer

Lansing and Grand Rapids have become the new homes to 51 of the Katrina survivors brought to Fort Custer Training Center last week.

According to the Michigan Department of Human Services, the resettlement effort began Friday when eight families and 11 individuals arrived at their new homes. Karen Stock, director of communications, said 34 people were taken to Lansing, 17 to Grand Rapids and 71 left on their own to be with friends or family.

A Fort Custer spokesman said 166 people remain at the base.

Stock said 98 people have expressed an interest in staying in Michigan and 60 staying at Fort Custer say they intend to go elsewhere, although the state is not transporting them. At least a dozen people are living at long-term care facilities and a few are in the hospital.

A baby boy was born at Battle Creek Health System on Friday, Stock said.

Apartments make up most of the housing opportunities, Stock said. While housing in the southeastern part of the state has not been used by the evacuees brought to Battle Creek, Stock said that housing in particular is available to any Hurricane Katrina survivors who come to Michigan on their own.

Christine Iwan covers regional news. She can be reached at 966-0684 or ciwan@battlecr.gannett.com.

Michigan

Can a state where residents themselves need help adequately provide for distressed newcomers?

By E.A. Torriero
Tribune staff reporter

BATTLE CREEK, Mich.—As nearly 300 hurricane evacuees arrived here last week, local residents lined the roads to wave and shout words of greeting.

A National Guard training center just outside this southern Michigan city turned into a latter-day Ellis Island. Red Cross workers, volunteers and others provided shelter, food, medical evaluations and light diversions, from puppet shows to basketball scrimmages.

Lutricia Bethley, 48, one of those airlifted from New Orleans, received clothes and staples, and locals took her 2-year-old dachshund, Snoop, for a bath, pedicure, manicure and immunizations.

"What a welcome," said Bethley's sister, Henrietta Dixon, also 48. Together they rode out the storm and the first days of its aftermath before leaving the Crescent City. "But you have to wonder: How long will this last?"

In cash- and job-strapped Michigan, where tens of thousands of residents already are struggling, that is more than a rhetorical question. Can a state where residents themselves need help adequately provide for distressed newcomers?

Michigan authorities say they are prepared to take in 10,000 storm migrants and support them for months on end.

At least 300 of the displaced had arrived in Michigan by Friday night, with several hundred more expected soon.

Public officials in the state have earmarked \$6 million for relief efforts and resettlement of survivors, and they expect reimbursement from the federal government.

But some social workers and watchdog groups predict Michigan will be making a costly mistake. In the short term, funds must come out of state coffers that have not a penny extra, they say, possibly leading to cuts elsewhere.

And as for federal payback, few here have faith in Washington given the Katrina relief problems.

In the coming days, state aid workers will relocate evacuees to one of several Michigan cit-

ies willing to accept them. Among the possible destinations is Detroit, a distressed and shrinking city of about 900,000 people and 12,000 abandoned houses. Detroit officials hope to relocate as many as 500 storm victims there.

That has some evacuees fretting that they will become second-class citizens offered the decaying leftovers that state residents are fleeing.

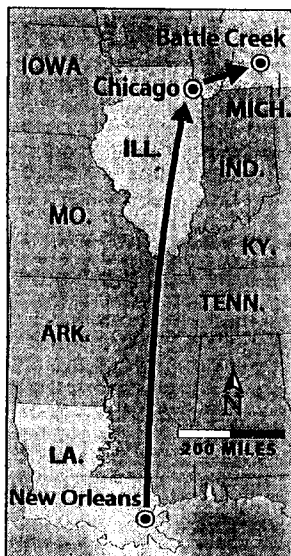
"I just want to go somewhere clean and safe," Dixon said. "I mean, I don't even know where I am."

The state will provide rent payments, food stamps, career counseling and medical care for at least six months, officials said.

Dixon, who worked as a housekeeping supervisor in New Orleans hotels, knows what it is like to live in subsidized housing. She received \$200 a month in government funds for her \$600 apartment in New Orleans. She is looking to welfare in Michigan to carry her while she searches for work.

But aside from Michigan's reputation for cold winters, she and her sister know nothing about the state.

When they boarded a plane on Monday in



New Orleans, they were not told where they were going, they said. The plane first stopped in Chicago. Passengers were told that the city was not yet prepared to house them, evacuees said. One hour later they landed at a National Guard airstrip here.

The sisters survived Katrina by huddling in Dixon's apartment, located between New Orleans' Superdome and convention center. For a week, they scavenged for food and skirted looters and assorted gunshots.

Though Dixon's courtyard apartment was not flooded or severely damaged, one ominous sign convinced the sisters that they had to leave—the number of dead bodies turning up around their neighborhood.

When a National Guard evacuation chopper landed nearby last Monday, the sisters gladly boarded it.

"Now we want to make a go of it here because we have no place to go," said Bethley, who worked as a nursing aide in New Orleans.

The sisters spent hours last week on the telephone trying to locate a third sibling. Finally, on Friday, with the help of the Red Cross, they found her at a shelter in Beaumont, Texas. They hope to reunite in Michigan, but there's no telling how or when that might happen.

In the meantime, the sisters can only wonder what the coming seasons will bring. Asked Bethley: "Do they have Mardi Gras around here?"

etorriero@tribune.com

Local task force looking for evacuees in county

By PAULA WETHINGTON
paula@monroenews.com

Local officials are hoping a group effort will help find and document all Hurricane Katrina evacuees who have relocated to Monroe County.

Nobody knows for sure how many evacuees are in Monroe County. The best guess is that at least 13 people are in the area and more are likely to arrive during the next few days and weeks.

The Hurricane Katrina Monroe County

Response Task Force met for the first time Monday and hope to begin locating evacuees so they can provide assistance.

"It's touching the infrastructure of this entire county," said Mike Hoydic, executive director of the United Way of Monroe County. "You have to make sure the financial resources are there."

The problem is that none of the evacuees are coming through official relocation chan-

See **EVACUEES**, Page 9A

FROM PAGE 1A

Evacuees (cont.)

nels such as the Fort Custer Training Center near Battle Creek. All of them made travel arrangements on their own to stay in Monroe County because of local friends or relatives. Local emergency and human services officials started meeting those people about a week ago and have no idea how many more will show up.

"We're seeing people literally hours after they arrive in town," said Laura J. Schultz, chief executive officer of the Monroe County chapter, American Red Cross, and chairwoman of the Katrina task force.

The group met for about two hours at the United Way of Monroe County office. About 35 people attended, representing agencies from Gabby's Ladder Family Grief Center to Mason Consolidated Schools.

Because of confidentiality rules within certain agencies, local officials can't build a common database with names and details about the evacuees and there's no way to determine how much their contacts overlap.

For example, the American Red Cross knows of 13 people, ranging from one 17-year-old whose school attendance was unknown to a senior citizen who is staying with a granddaughter.

The Monroe County Department of Human Services has received eight applications for assistance, mostly for the state food assistance program and medical care. "Obviously, we're not see-

EVACUEES URGED TO CALL RED CROSS

Any individuals and families who have arrived in Monroe County from areas affected by Hurricane Katrina are asked to check in with the Monroe County Chapter, American Red Cross, to make an appointment regarding their national and local disaster relief benefits.

The Red Cross chapter has been designated as the local agency to help hurricane evacuees find out about and make

contact with resources and programs from the local, state and federal levels. For example, the Red Cross can help hurricane families register on line with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and provide direct referrals to other resources.

The local Red Cross office is at 1645 N. Dixie Hwy., just east of I-75's Exit 15. The phone number is 289-1481 or call (800) 391-8668.

ing everybody," DHS director Terrence Beurer said after hearing the Red Cross statistics.

Jefferson School District Supt. Timothy Fitzpatrick reported three school-age children evacuated from the hurricane area registered for classes Monday in his district. Nobody else attending the Katrina task force meeting had yet learned about those children.

"Everybody gets a little bit of different information," said Glenda White, assistant director of the Monroe County Emergency Management Division.

The hope is that through information and ideas shared via the task force, local officials can handle as many needs as possible on an individual referral basis. For example, someone who makes an appointment at the Monroe County Health Department for

a vaccination but needs a ride could have that arranged through a Lake Erie Transit bus pass or dial-a-ride medical transportation service.

As long as people arrive on an individual basis, local officials will continue to care for them on a one-on-one situation. Ms. Schultz said that most of the people she has met hope to go back home to the Gulf Coast, although it may be a few months before that happens.

Ms. Schultz, however, told the committee members to think about what to do if a busload of people suddenly were delivered to Monroe County.

"We definitely have to be ready," Ms. White added.

Although the Red Cross has shelter agreements in place with area schools and churches, it would take a lot of volunteer hours to keep such a place operating past the usual

72 hours seen during a tornado or blizzard. Even with 78 new Red Cross volunteers trained for disaster relief during the past week, Ms. Schultz said a long-term shelter operation would be a difficult situation to manage.

In addition, some vacant buildings such as Luna Pie Elementary School can't be set up for use as a shelter on quick notice because there are no shower facilities there.

The resulting discussion included where to stage a reception area; information about a local hotel owner who is willing to wait for FEMA reimbursement instead of asking for cash up front; and who is keeping a list of vacant homes and apartments that evacuees can rent. At this time, local officials are not asking for shared housing arrangements.

Other ideas include setting up a volunteer coordinator who can help direct local volunteers and non-profit groups who have offered services such as social events; and a Monroe County orientation meeting to introduce evacuees to community services such as a Monroe County Public Library and Mercy Memorial Hospital.

◆ ◆ ◆

The next meeting for the Katrina task force is 3 p.m. Tuesday at the Monroe County chapter, American Red Cross, 1645 N. Dixie Hwy. For information, call the Red Cross at 289-1481.

Michigan Report

September 13, 2005

HOUSE SENDS SEVERAL CHILD PROTECTION BILLS TO GRANHOLM

The House gave final passage Tuesday to the first batch of bills designed to keep sex offenders away from children.

Sent to Governor Jennifer Granholm for her signature were bills that would create a safety zone around schools that certain criminals could not breach (HB 4932), penalize sex offenders for failing to report their residency to local police (HB 4934), require criminal background checks for certain workers at child day care centers and home day care (HB 4936), allow evidence of past crimes to be used against certain defendants (HB 4937), criminalize day care center employees who fail to report certain criminal charges against them (HB 4958) and limit teacher tenure for teachers convicted of certain crimes (HB 4991).

Other bills in this package were sent to the Senate.

MIRS
September 13, 2005

Cox Arrests Rockwood Internet Sexual Predator

Today, Attorney General Mike **COX** announced the arrest of a Rockwood automobile salesman for using the Internet to commit child sexual abuse.

"We have made enormous strides in protecting children from dangerous predators in Michigan," Cox said. "Since 2003, my office has charged more than 70 sexual predators and pornographers who were looking to harm children through use of the Internet. We will continue to prosecute these dangerous criminals and provide educational information to parents to keep the Internet safe for our youngest citizens."

Attorney General investigators arrested Rockwood resident Kenneth Lee **ARQUETTE**, 43, in Southfield Monday. He was arraigned this afternoon in Southfield's 46th District Court before Magistrate Kay **SPINKS** on one count of Child Sexually Abusive Activity and one count of Using a Computer to Commit a Crime, both 20-year felonies. Arquette was also arraigned on three counts of Using a Computer to Distribute Obscene Matter to a Minor, a four-year felony.

Spinks set Arquette's bond at \$125,000 cash/surety and he will be back in court Sept. 19 at 8:30 a.m. for a pre-exam conference.

A criminal charge is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. Since 2003, Cox's Child and Public Protection Unit has arrested 71 alleged Internet child sexual predators and pornographers.

Details of video game legislation

Associated Press

9/12/2005, 4:51 p.m. ET

(AP) — Gov. Jennifer Granholm on Monday signed two bills aimed at keeping minors away from adult-rated video games. She plans to sign two more video game bills later this week. The laws:

- Make it a felony to disseminate video games that depict sexually explicit matter. Violators face two years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.
- Bar retailers from selling or renting ultra-violent explicit video games that are "harmful to minors." First-time violators face a civil infraction and a \$5,000 fine. A third offense is a felony punishable by two years in prison and a \$40,000 fine.
- Exempt parents or guardians from disseminating ultra-violent games to their children.
- Require retailers to post a sign that gives information about the video game industry's rating system. Violators face a civil infraction and a \$1,000 fine.
- Make it an affirmative legal defense that a retailer acted in good faith when it sold to a minor who showed what appeared to be valid identification.

Parents say they caged 8 kids to protect them

Couple claims adopted kids had to be separated at night; authorities say they appear well-fed.

By M.R. Kropko / Associated Press

WAKEMAN, Ohio -- The 11 children removed from a house where authorities say some of them slept in homemade cages are polite, well-behaved, well-dressed and appear to have been well-fed, neighbors and authorities said Tuesday.

Their adoptive parents, Michael Gravelle, 56, and Sharen Gravelle, 57, denied in a custody hearing Monday that they abused or neglected the children, who are ages 1-14 and have conditions that included autism and fetal alcohol syndrome.

No charges had been filed as of Tuesday afternoon, and messages left with the couple's lawyer were not immediately returned.

The Gravelles have said a psychiatrist recommended they make the children sleep in the cages, Huron County Prosecutor Russell Leffler told the Norwalk Reflector. The parents said the children, including some who had mental disorders, needed to be protected from each other, according to a search warrant on file at Norwalk Municipal Court.

Leffler refused to speak with an Associated Press reporter Tuesday at his office.

Neighbors said they often saw or heard the children playing, and the family yard was littered with toys -- plastic cars, tricycles, slides and an overturned skateboard near a wooden ramp. Seven bicycles were piled in a storage shed.

"Those kids were dressed better than some of the kids who live in Cleveland. They behaved like any other kids when they were outside playing," said Jim Power, who lives across the street.

At night, authorities say, eight of the children were confined in 3 1/2 -foot-tall wooden cages stacked in bedrooms on the second floor. The cages were painted in bright, primary colors, with some rigged with alarms that would send a signal to the downstairs when a cage door was opened. One cage had a dresser in front of it, county sheriff's Lt. Randy Sommers said Tuesday.

"The sheriff and I stood there for a few minutes and just kind of stared at what we were seeing. We were speechless," Sommers said.

The children have been placed with four foster families and were doing well, said Erich Dumbeck, director of the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services.

"We're still trying to figure out what happened in that home. We don't have any indication at this point that there was any abuse," Dumbeck said.

Sommers said a social worker investigating a complaint contacted authorities. Dumbeck would not discuss the complaint.

According to the search warrant, the cages had mats and the house smelled of urine. One boy said he slept in a cage for three years, Sommers said. A baby slept in a small bed, and two girls used mattresses

Although the family has lived in Huron County for 10 years, the children were adopted through other counties and states, Dumbeck said. He said his agency was trying to determine how the adoptions were completed.

"I don't believe there were any caseworkers checking in with this family," he said. Reviews are ordered only when there is a complaint.

One of the children, a boy born with HIV, was adopted as an infant in 2001 through the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, the agency's director Jim McCafferty said. For caring for him, the Gravelles received a subsidy of at least \$500 a month.

Neighbors Have Praise for Children Who Slept in Cages

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: September 14, 2005

WAKEMAN, Ohio, Sept. 13 (AP) - The 11 children removed from a house where the authorities say some slept in homemade cages are polite, well behaved and well dressed and appear to have been well fed, neighbors and the authorities said Tuesday.

The children's adoptive parents, Michael Gravelle, 56, and Sharen Gravelle, 57, denied in a custody hearing Monday that they had abused or neglected the children, who are ages 1 to 14 and have conditions that included autism and fetal alcohol syndrome.

No charges had been filed as of Tuesday afternoon, and there was no immediate reply to messages left with the Gravelles' lawyer.

The Gravelles have said a psychiatrist recommended that they make the children sleep in the cages, Russell Leffler, the Huron County prosecutor, told The Norwalk Reflector, a daily newspaper in Huron County. The parents said the children, including some who had mental disorders, needed to be protected from one another, according to a search warrant on file at Norwalk Municipal Court.

Mr. Leffler refused to speak with an Associated Press reporter Tuesday at his office.

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"Those kids were dressed better than some of the kids who live in Cleveland," said Jim Power, who lives across the street. "They behaved like any other kids when they were outside playing."

At night, the authorities say, eight of the children were confined in three-and-a-half-foot-tall wooden cages stacked in bedrooms on the second floor. The cages were painted in bright, primary colors. Some were rigged with alarms that would go off when the door was opened. One cage had a dresser in front of it, Lt. Randy Sommers of the Huron County Sheriff's Office said.

"The sheriff and I stood there for a few minutes and just kind of stared at what we were seeing," Lieutenant Sommers said.

No one answered the Gravelles' door Tuesday, and the gray, four-bedroom house was dark. A pig, roosters and other animals shared the yard.

The children have been placed with four foster families and were doing well, said Erich Dumbeck, director of the Huron County Department of Job and Family Services.

"We're still trying to figure out what happened in that home," Mr. Dumbeck said. "We don't have any indication at this point that there was any abuse."

Wakeman is a town of about 1,000 people about 50 miles west of Cleveland.

'I am scared for my life' Woman killed 3 months after getting personal protection order

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

BY AMALIE NASH

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Police say Bennett's worst fears were realized Tuesday morning when her 33-year-old ex-boyfriend confronted her at her home in the 1000 block of Stamford Road. By the time he fled in her car, Bennett was dying in a neighbor's yard where she had collapsed, Washtenaw County Sheriff's detectives said.

Police arrested the ex-boyfriend in Southfield later in the day and say he will be arraigned Thursday in the death of Bennett, the mother of two young children.

It was the second death of a young woman during the last four months that police have tied to a former boyfriend.

"In my mind, it's unacceptable to have yet another homicide related to domestic violence in the county this year," said Barbara Niess, executive director of SafeHouse, Washtenaw County's domestic violence shelter. "I pledge to the community that I will do what I can to bring folks together to have systems that work and systems that don't allow this to happen again."

Bennett ended the relationship in April, investigators said, and called police at least five times after the break-up when he returned or reportedly used her credit card.

Sheriff's Cmdr. Dave Egeler said Bennett stopped by her home at around 9 a.m. Tuesday to pick up paperwork for a visit to a Secretary of State branch, and the ex-boyfriend confronted her there. It's unclear when he showed up or why.

Bennett's 7-year-old daughter was at school at the time, and her 1-year-old son was at day care. Bennett, a 1997 Saline High School graduate, worked for Hyundai; her position with the company was not available Tuesday.

"We don't know exactly what happened, but there was a violent assault, and she fled the house and ran down Stamford toward Norfolk, where she collapsed in a side yard next to the street," Egeler said. "We started receiving 911 calls, and she was taken to the hospital, where she died in surgery."

Authorities have not released the cause of death.

Police found Bennett's 2005 Chevrolet Equinox in Redford Township, and the ex-boyfriend - whose name was not made public Tuesday - was arrested in Southfield a few hours later.

"We developed information early on after the assault - and the actions directly after the assault were witnessed by others - to develop him as a suspect in the case," Egeler said.

Steven Kirby, an Eastern Michigan University professor who lives across the street from Bennett's home, heard the commotion when an ambulance and police cars arrived. He said he welcomed Bennett when she moved in about a year ago and saw a man there a few times, but he did not know them beyond an occasional greeting.

Kirby also said he heard arguing that came from across the street within the past week, but he didn't know if that involved Bennett or was connected to the former boyfriend.

"I was jolted this morning," said Kirby, who described the neighborhood as quiet. "I've been here almost 15 years and never had any problems here. I only spoke to her once or twice. It's just horrible, and I'm really sorry about her."

Sheriff's deputies had been to the home several times; almost all were after the April break-up, Egeler said. The boyfriend was arrested once in April on a warrant for never acquiring a driver's license, Egeler said.

Bennett and her ex-boyfriend had a son in May 2004, and several months later, she petitioned for child support, court records show. He was ordered to pay \$108 monthly and said in court records that he worked for a company in Eastpointe.

By June, Bennett wrote that she needed a personal protection order to gain a sense of security in an "extreme situation." She cited five cases where police were called for arguments, the former boyfriend pushing her to prevent her from calling police, yelling at her, repeatedly calling her and driving by her home Bennett said in the PPO application that her former boyfriend called her at work at least 31 times on June 2 and left nine messages. She discussed an incident the previous evening in which he allegedly saw a male friend's car in her driveway and called her to threaten the man, then followed the friend when he left until the other man flagged down a sheriff's deputy.

"I do not feel safe in my home or away from my home," Bennett wrote. "(He) does not seem to understand that our relationship is over."

Bennett's ex-boyfriend is expected to be arraigned on an open murder charge Thursday.

Police say they're continuing to investigate the case, and local domestic violence experts say they also want to gather more information.

Bennett's slaying follows the May 21 shooting death of a 25-year-old Ypsilanti Township woman, who left behind four small children. Her ex-boyfriend was arrested that day and charged with her murder.

In July 2004, a 25-year-old woman who lived in a townhouse not far from Tuesday's homicide was shot to death in what police labeled as a murder-suicide involving her boyfriend. And last September, an Ypsilanti Township woman who had obtained a PPO against her ex-husband was shot twice in the face when he showed up at her apartment. She survived, and he was convicted of attempted murder.

"Our department has always treated domestic violence as a very serious crime, and unfortunately, we've seen twice this year just how lethal it can be," Egeler said. "It's tragic that not only these two young women lost their lives this year, but they left behind children who have to grow up without a mother."

Amalie Nash can be reached at anash@annarbornnews.com or (734) 994-6832.

Facts about domestic violence

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Ann Arbor News

Women reported approximately 900,000 domestic violence assaults nationwide in 2000, but that figure is considered conservative. National agencies have estimated the number of women assaulted annually at between 1.9 and 3.9 million.

Thirty-seven percent of women visiting emergency rooms are there as a result of a domestic violence assault and 30 percent of female homicide victims are killed by their partners. In 1998, 75 percent of all intimate-partner homicides were women.

Sixty percent of battered women are beaten while they are pregnant, often in the stomach. Many assaults will last for hours. Many are planned.

Women are more likely to experience a physical assault at the hands of their partner, while men are more likely to be assaulted by a stranger.

Women experience more serious levels of assault than men do; they are two to three times more likely to be grabbed, pushed or shoved and at least seven times more likely to be beaten up or choked or for a partner to try to drown them.

Once violence begins in a relationship, it almost always gets worse and more frequent over a period of time. Battering is not just one physical attack. It is a number of tactics - intimidation, threats, economic deprivation, psychological and sexual abuse - used repeatedly.

An abuser often will dramatically escalate his violence when a woman leaves or tries to because he wants to re-assert control and ownership.

To get help:

Visit the Domestic Violence Project/SafeHouse Web site at www.dvpsh.org/index.php or call the crisis line at (734) 995-5444.

Source: SafeHouse

Why neighbors don't like this house

September 14, 2005

BY CECIL ANGEL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Not again!

That's what many Highland Park residents upset about the latest group home to open in the city are saying.

For a city struggling to draw middle-class residents, expand its tax base and live up to its title of Cool City, the number of adult foster care homes, drug and alcohol treatment centers, and homeless shelters is overwhelming.

"We're a homeowner's community," said Ronald Jones, who lives on Colorado across the street from the most recently licensed home, which opened for business in June. "We have solid families here."

According to the state Department of Human Services, Highland Park's adult care homes average about one per roughly 800 residents in the 2.9-square-mile city of 15,675 residents.

In contrast, the adjacent suburb of Hamtramck, with just over 22,000 residents, has only two AFC homes.

But the 20 AFC homes are just one part of the problem in Highland Park, which also is home to Doorstep, one of the biggest homeless shelters for women and children in the state; numerous facilities run by the Detroit Rescue Mission, including a residential treatment facility for 86 men; the Ruth Ellis Center for gay youth, and many other shelters and treatment centers.

Jones' wife, Sandra Jones, said last month she and her husband care about helping people with disabilities, but they believe the city is shouldering too much.

"I think it will become an East Grand Boulevard," she said, referring to a part of Detroit's east side where several group homes and nursing facilities are clustered.

Despite the arguments, Yvette Willingham of Detroit, a real estate investor and owner of the two-story, brick-and-stucco home at 25 Colorado, said her Franklin Manor will help the city.

"It's a bit offensive to me that there are people attempting to make trouble or block me," she said. "They're being apprehensive, but I can't blame people for being afraid of the unknown."

But it has been tough for city officials who were proud when Gov. Jennifer Granholm designated Highland Park as a Cool City. The designation allows the city access to marketing tools to promote efforts to revitalize its downtown.

"On the one hand we get a real positive thing happening, and on the other hand, we have these adult foster care homes coming in," City Council President Ameenah Omar said.

RELATED CONTENT

ROYAL OAK:

Clubhouse may
be closer to
getting in

**Clubhouses vs.
group homes**

Unlike group
homes,

clubhouses are
not residences.

They are places
where adults with
mental illnesses
go to learn job
skills during the
day. In the

evenings and on
weekends,

clubhouses also
offer members
social activities.

"We feel that the image is important as we try to rebuild and revitalize."

There are public safety concerns, too, over long-established AFCs.

Lt. Paul Jones of the Wayne County Sheriff's Office said, "One of the biggest issues is that you have some operating that have not been through the proper channels."

There have been complaints to deputies about residents of some group homes and shelters panhandling and loitering outside stores or getting drunk.

"They're supposed to be in a structured group home," Jones said. However, "it's not a prison. They can move about."

Willingham defends her business. She pays property taxes on Franklin Manor and in the last three or four months, she said she has spent more money renovating the house than anyone else in the neighborhood. So far, no one is living at the house, where remodeling is being completed.

The state doesn't regulate how many AFC homes are in a community, said Savannah Woods, licensing consultant for the state Office of Children and Adult Licensing in Detroit.

"We don't care where they're located," she said. "As long as they're six or less" residents "they can be anywhere."

Woods said there's no such thing as too many places where adults with disabilities can live, but "there's too many vacant homes, too many crack houses -- that's too many."

Contact CECIL ANGEL at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com.

SHADOW HANGS OVER MOVE: Clubhouse may be closer to getting in

September 14, 2005

BY EMILIA ASKARI
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

In a case that has drawn national attention, a clubhouse for adults with mental illness may be a step closer to moving to Royal Oak.

The U.S. Attorney General's Office has filed a motion in federal court, saying that the city's efforts to block the clubhouse amount to discrimination against people with disabilities.

Unlike group homes, clubhouses are not residences. They are places where adults with mental illness go to learn job skills during the day. In the evenings and on weekends, clubhouses offer social activities for members.

Royal Oak's campaign to stop the Dreams Unlimited clubhouse from moving to a former day-care center on Catalpa has been unusually strong, said Pauline Anderson, director of development for the International Center for Clubhouse Development, a nonprofit based in New York City.

"This is the first time we're seeing this much opposition for this long a time," she said.

Dreams Unlimited has operated without problems in Oak Park for many years, according to Oak Park police. Funded with state mental health money, it has about 70 members. About 20 of them might use the clubhouse on a typical day.

Almost two years ago, Dreams Unlimited leased the brick building, near a dentist's office, a party store and a travel agency at 1222 Catalpa in Royal Oak, because it offered larger rooms for group activities.

When managers sought a permit from the city to expand the existing kitchen, city officials and neighbors learned of Dreams Unlimited plans. They told the clubhouse's managers that Dreams Unlimited did not comply with local zoning because it was incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

More than 100 people packed a planning commission meeting on March 9, 2004. Many feared that property values would go down, or that clubhouse members would threaten their kids. The move has been stalled since then.

Easter Seals, the clubhouse's manager, filed a federal suit against the city in January.

A hearing on the motion to have federal attorneys intervene, or become a plaintiff, is planned for next week in U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan. "We're alleging intentional discrimination on the basis of mental illness," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Judith Levy. "I think the law is very clearly on our side."

Kay Middleton is a Royal Oak resident and member of the Dreams Unlimited clubhouse. She said several members live in apartments about three blocks from the place she spotted on Catalpa and brought to the attention of managers.

Although opponents' comments have sometimes made Middleton feel "like a worm," she said the incident has strengthened the sense of community among members.

RELATED CONTENT

Why neighbors don't like this house

Dan Dalton, the attorney representing Royal Oak, said he will argue that the Americans with Disabilities Act is not more important than local zoning rules, which he says prevents businesses like Dreams Unlimited that are not in harmony with the neighborhood.

"Their argument seems to be that the ADA trumps local zoning law and local communities cannot consider neighborhood concerns," Dalton said. "And we believe that the law doesn't support their position."

Easter Seals is happy to have the U.S. government on its side. Earlier, Michigan Protection and Advocacy and the Michigan Civil Rights Commission had filed amicus briefs supporting the clubhouse's efforts to move into the building.

"There are a lot of organizations ... who are saying that Royal Oak needs to revisit some of its protocols for zoning," Elizabeth Boyce, chief development officer for Easter Seals of Michigan, said Monday. "Nobody in this country is allowed to keep someone out because of race, ethnicity, disability or anything like that."

Contact EMILIA ASKARI at 248-351-3298 or askari@freepress.com. Staff writers L.L. Brasier and David Ashenfelter contributed.

State begins Medicare drug information plan

9/12/2005, 6:29 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The state on Monday started its efforts to educate Michigan's Medicare population about upcoming changes to federal prescription drug coverage plans. The state's 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries will begin receiving information about specific plans available in their areas next month, according to the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging and the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program.

The new federal plan is scheduled to begin Jan. 1. Beneficiaries can begin enrolling in available drug plans Nov. 15.

Two help lines have been established to help Medicare recipients sort through options.

Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program counselors can be reached by calling (800) 803-7174. Medicare's help line is (800) MEDICARE.

On the Net:

Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program: <http://www.mymmap.org>

Man faces murder charge in death of sister

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

By Helen Lounsbury
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

WEST BRANCH - An Ogemaw County man was jailed Tuesday on open murder charges in connection with the death of his elderly sister in an August house fire.

Prosecutors charged Jerry D. Hawley, 64, on Tuesday with arson and murder. Police say Hawley is the prime suspect in the death of Ruby Nichols, 82.

Hawley's arrest comes two weeks after police responded to reports of a house fire on Allen Road in Ogemaw County's Horton Township. Firefighters found the house, a mobile home, fully engulfed in flames when they arrived, police said.

Family members inside the home, including Hawley, escaped the Aug. 31 blaze unharmed. But they were unable to reach Nichols, police say they reported.

Hawley and Nichols, siblings, lived together with two more adults and two children, all related, police said. Hawley's niece owned the home.

"We made the arrest based on our findings at the scene, statements from witnesses and evidence we seized," said Det. Sgt. Tom Grace of the Ogemaw County Sheriff's Department.

Grace declined to elaborate on the investigation.

On Tuesday, Hawley was appointed William P. Jennings Jr. as his defense attorney. Jennings asked for a competency examination to determine Hawley's ability to stand trial, Prosecutor LaDonna Schultz said.

The evaluation will delay the suspect's evidence hearing in local District Court indefinitely, police said.

District Judge Richard E. Noble has set Hawley's bond at \$1 million.

Helen Lounsbury covers regional news for The Times. She can be reached at 1-800-727-7661 or by e-mail at hlounsbury@bc-times.com.

Owners of Nursing Home in New Orleans Charged in Deaths of 34

By SHAILA DEWAN and AL BAKER
The New York Times

Published: September 14, 2005

BATON ROUGE, La., Sept. 13 - The owners of a nursing home where 34 people died in the floodwaters that inundated the New Orleans area were charged Tuesday with multiple counts of negligent homicide, shortly after a new dispute broke out between the State of Louisiana and the federal government over the retrieval of hundreds of other bodies.

Mable B. Mangano and her husband, Salvatore A. Mangano Sr., owners of St. Rita's Nursing Home in Violet, just east of New Orleans, turned themselves in after the charges were filed, Attorney General Charles C. Foti Jr. said. He said the couple had not acted on several warnings to move the residents as Hurricane Katrina approached.

"They were warned repeatedly, both by the media and by the St. Bernard Parish emergency preparation people, that the storm was coming," Mr. Foti said at a news conference here. "In effect, I think that their inactions resulted in the death of these people."

The charges represent the first major prosecution to emerge in the hurricane's aftermath.

The legal action came as the pace of recovery of the storm's other casualties increased. Louisiana authorities said the number of confirmed dead in the state increased to 423, a substantial rise from the 279 reported on Monday. Bob Johannessen, a spokesman for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, said the number of confirmations was expected to rise each day.

Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco said the pace of recoveries should have been much faster, however, and accused the Federal Emergency Management Agency of slowing the retrieval of the dead to the point where the contractor responsible for that work had threatened to pull out. After days of news reports of bodies in the streets of New Orleans, Ms. Blanco, with palpable frustration, said the state would bypass FEMA and sign its own contract with the company, Kenyon Worldwide Disaster Management.

"In recent days, I have spoken with FEMA officials and administration officials to convey my absolute frustration regarding the lack of urgency and the lack of respect involving the recovery of our people whose lives were lost as a result of Hurricane Katrina," Ms. Blanco said at a news

conference in Baton Rouge. "We have pleaded for contract resolution. In death, as in life, our people deserve more respect than they have received."

FEMA officials responded by saying that the recovery of bodies was a state responsibility, while the federal role was to assist state officials.

"The state has always maintained direct control over the mortuary process following this tragedy," Vice Adm. Thad W. Allen of the Coast Guard, who is directing FEMA efforts in the region, said in a written statement. "We are committed to a process that treats the victims of Katrina with dignity and respect and accomplishes the mission as quickly as possible. We will work with state officials on what they believe to be the best solution for their constituents."

Kenyon officials said they had been struggling under cumbersome conditions to execute a task that gets grislier by the day. The company, which has a contract with FEMA to respond when called, arrived Sept. 1 but was not asked to begin recovering bodies until Sept. 6, said Bill Berry, a company spokesman.

The company's 100 or so workers have bunked in a funeral home in Baton Rouge, forcing them to drive four hours round-trip each day, and Kenyon officials said they had repeatedly asked for living quarters in New Orleans.

On Sunday, Kenyon officials told FEMA that they would not enter into a contract with the agency and would pull out as soon as a replacement was found, Mr. Berry said.

Mr. Berry said the company was already responding to Ms. Blanco's request that it increase its staffing even before the new contract was completed. "We just keep moving the cots a little closer together," he said.

Mr. Berry said he did not consider it appropriate to discuss why the company did not want to continue working under FEMA. But he had high praise for the state, which reached out to Kenyon after the company notified FEMA on Sunday that it would not accept a contract.

"I can't say enough about the Louisiana state people," Mr. Berry said. "They heard our problems, and they simply fixed them. It's beautiful to see a general sitting there from the National Guard saying, 'I can do that,' and it's done."

William Yardley contributed reporting from New Orleans for this article, and Eric Lipton from Baton Rouge, La.

Owners of Nursing Home Charged

Negligent Homicide Alleged in Deaths of 34 Patients Who Were Not Evacuated

By Peter Whoriskey and Ann Scott Tyson Washington Post Staff Writers

Wednesday, September 14, 2005; Page A01

BATON ROUGE, La., Sept. 13 -- Louisiana authorities charged the owners of a New Orleans area nursing home with negligent homicide Tuesday after 34 patients perished in the facility in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

On a day in which Louisiana's death toll escalated to 423, state Attorney General Charles C. Foti Jr. said the owners of St. Rita's nursing home in St. Bernard Parish had been warned repeatedly by government officials and the news media that Katrina was coming, and also declined to evacuate the patients when asked if they wanted to do so. "In effect, their inaction resulted in the deaths of these patients," he said.

Foti announced the charges against the owners, Mable B. Mangano, 62, and Salvador A. Mangano, 65, at a late-afternoon news conference here. He said they had turned themselves in and had been booked on 34 counts of negligent homicide at the East Baton Rouge Parish jail. Foti also said the state would investigate the deaths of 45 patients whose bodies were discovered Monday at Memorial Medical Center in New Orleans, as well as any other instances in which negligence may have led to the deaths of senior citizens or others unable to care for themselves.

"I'm going to look at every place in the affected area where patients died of unnatural causes," he said. A hospital or health care facility with "people that can't make a free choice because they are sick or unable to care for themselves has a duty to provide for their safety."

Bob Habans, an attorney for the Manganos, said they are "completely innocent." He said the couple and their children and grandchildren had attempted to evacuate residents, and had saved 50 people at the nursing home. "When all of the facts come out, everyone will know that they were heroes in this tragedy," he said.

As state officials issued an updated death toll, Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco (D) once again ripped into the Federal Emergency Management Agency for not moving more rapidly to collect the bodies of those who died in the storm and its aftermath.

Saying she had expressed her "absolute frustration" to federal authorities about the pace of recovering bodies, Blanco told reporters, "I cannot stand by while this vital operation is not being handled appropriately." She said the state signed a contract with a body-recovery company that had been in prolonged discussions with FEMA to do the same work.

Coast Guard Vice Adm. Thad W. Allen, the on-scene federal coordinator of disaster relief, responded in a written statement: "The state has always maintained direct control over the mortuary process following this tragedy. We are committed to a process that treats the victims of Katrina with dignity and respect and accomplishes the mission as quickly as possible. We will work with state officials on what they believe to be the best solution for their constituents."

Meanwhile, there were additional signs of recovery along the battered Gulf Coast. Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport resumed limited commercial service with the arrival of a Northwest Airlines flight that carried only about 30 passengers, including federal

emergency relief officials. The Port of New Orleans was due to handle its first ship since before the hurricane hit on the morning of Aug. 29 -- well ahead of predictions that it could be out of business for months.

The overall death toll from the storm topped more than 640 on Tuesday, including 218 in Mississippi and a few deaths in Alabama. In Louisiana, the number of confirmed dead leapt from 279 to 423, and officials in New Orleans said many more bodies are likely to be found as waters recede an average of one city block a day and allow them to reach neighborhoods that experienced the most severe flooding. State mortuary workers said they were ramping up their manpower in New Orleans on Tuesday to remove more bodies.

A California National Guard unit looking for bodies rescued an unconscious and emaciated Edgar Hollingsworth, 74, from his house, and doctors said they expected him to survive, the Orange County Register reported.

As the work shifts from rescue and evacuation of the living toward the recovery of remains, the U.S. military has begun planning for withdrawing some of the 68,000 troops, 21 ships and dozens of aircraft from the Gulf Coast region, senior military officials said.

A large-scale troop pullout is already underway in Mississippi, with all of the several thousand out-of-state National Guard forces there scheduled to depart within eight to 10 days, Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honore, commander of Joint Task Force Katrina, said in an interview.

Military forces are expected to remain longer in Louisiana, but with the primary search effort in New Orleans expected to be completed by Wednesday, thousands of troops are expected to start departing within weeks, according to FEMA and military officials.

"It will be weeks, not months," when active-duty soldiers begin departing Louisiana, said Brig. Gen. Mark A. Graham, deputy commanding general of the 5th U.S. Army. About 7,200 active-duty troops, including 5,200 soldiers and 2,000 Marines, are engaged in relief work.

Honore said that as lifesaving missions such as search and rescue, providing food and water, and medical evacuation wind down, so will the military presence. He said some helicopter crews are already departing, including those from the 4th Infantry Division, which is preparing to return to Iraq.

In terms of providing security, Honore indicated that the city has an adequate law enforcement presence without federal troops. But Honore and other officials said the military is likely to stay to assist the city with planning, logistics and basic services until it can bring back a full contingent of municipal workers. "Until we've got these city workers back, we've got to keep the city running," he said.

One military unit winding up its mission Tuesday was a contingent of the 20th Special Forces Group, which has rescued nearly 8,000 New Orleans residents using inflated Zodiac boats since the flood hit. The unit, trained to partner closely with indigenous forces abroad, used those skills to help organize the search effort for the New Orleans Police Department.

Now, its officers say, the police are ready to work on their own. "We think they'll be on their feet in the next two days. They'll be able to handle it and we'll pull out," said Warrant Officer Bruce Erick, from a 20th Special Forces Group team based in Birmingham. The team helped the police carry out a systematic search plan.

As recovery efforts continued, FEMA's newly named acting director, R. David Paulison, spoke to reporters in Washington and said he will examine later the lessons learned from FEMA's failures.

"I can't deal with what happened in the last two weeks, but I can tell you, from this point forward, we are going to be focusing on the victims of this hurricane," he said. "But we've had a

hurricane of unimaginable proportions, and we're going to deal with it. We're going to get those people out of shelters, and we're going to move and get them the help that they need."

At the same news conference, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff once again praised Michael D. Brown, who resigned as FEMA director on Monday after being yanked back to Washington amid withering reviews of the agency's performance the first week of the disaster.

"As I said previously, I believe Mike Brown did everything that was within his capability to manage this crisis effectively," he said.

Tyson reported from New Orleans. Staff writers Dan Balz and Spencer S. Hsu in Washington contributed to this report.

Teens Accused Of Oakland County Home Invasion

Homeowner Locates Suspects, Notifies Police

POSTED: 1:05 pm EDT September 13, 2005

Three teenagers were arrested in connection with a home invasion in Oakland County Monday. Waterford police responded to a report of a robbery at a home located in the 3000 block of Newberry Street at about 9 a.m. The home had been broken into and property had been stolen, police said.

Witnesses said they saw three teenagers around the home at the time of the incident.

At about 5 p.m., the homeowner located possible suspects in a vehicle in the area of Lake Angelus and Baldwin roads, according to Waterford police. The victim notified the Lake Angelus Police Department.

Three teenagers -- a 15-year-old from Waterford, a 17-year-old from Auburn Hills and a 17-year-old from Pontiac -- were turned over to the custody of Waterford police. Officers questioned the boys about the home invasion, and the 17-year-olds were being held at the Oakland County Jail, police said. The 15-year-old boy was taken to Oakland County Children's Village.

Police are reviewing the case with the Oakland County prosecutor's office for charges.

No injuries were reported in the home invasion.

Police said they do not believe Monday's incident was connected to a home invasion in Lake Angelus Sunday.

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Determination, friends pave way for food van

With help of friends, Milan man delivers needed supplies in Mississippi

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

BY GEOFF LARCOM
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

So Flint, 55, contacted Jens Mayer, a friend and former neighbor in Milan who's now a manager of the Big Boy Restaurant on Washtenaw Avenue in Ann Arbor. Area Big Boy franchises had been working with a Detroit radio station in gathering goods for Katrina victims, and Mayer said his employees would load up supplies to help Flint.

But Flint needed a van or trailer so he began calling anyone he knew - the old friend of a friend of a friend routine - and he finally found someone willing to lend their van for a trip to the hurricane devastation zone.

Big Boy employees jammed the van with canned goods and water bottles and Flint headed south alone last Friday night. He drove straight through the night until he reached the home of a longtime friend in Athens, a small town in north Alabama, at about 8 a.m. the next morning. Flint grabbed a couple of hours sleep, then headed farther south with his friend, 55-year-old Doug Heath. They were unsure of their destination but resolute in their intent to help some victims.

They headed southwest on Interstate 59, first to Meridian, Miss., just over the Alabama border, and then on to Laurel, about 100 miles from the ravaged Gulf coast towns of Biloxi and Gulfport. They drove amid convoys of tree-cutters, electrical service and military vehicles, while a group of ambulances sped by going the other way.

The scene in Laurel was grim. Each intersection was overseen by troops from the National Guard, there was no power and the gas station lines stretched on and on. "It was really not a safe place," Flint says that they concluded as they drove around with a van obviously loaded down with food and water.

Their gas was running dangerously low, but they headed farther south, to Ellisville, in hopes of finding a proper place to drop off their bounty. They pulled into a hotel and called police at 911, getting no answer. "It was a pretty eerie feeling," Flint said.

The desk clerk at the hotel, a charming elderly lady, recommended that Flint call her church.

The pastor sent over his 20-year-old son, Charlie Woodward, to supervise the unloading of the van's contents into a church storage area. As the two friends carried loads from the van, the pastor's son "must have blessed us 100 times," Flint says.

Sunday, the National Guard would escort the food down to Gulfport, completing a successful trip for Flint and Heath.

Heath, contacted by phone at his home in Alabama, praised his friend's initiative. "Anybody able to volunteer, who could actually do it, should be commended," Heath said.

Once their supplies were dropped at the church, the friends' final challenge was simple yet daunting: Get gas before they ran out.

The lines at most stations stretched 30 cars long and patience was wearing thin at stations in Meridian. But the two waited it out in line, and finally made it back home to Athens.

Flint, a Milan area merchant who has worked in the mental health profession, says he wouldn't recommend just anyone making the trip. "The things you see down there are just amazing," he said.

That concern aside, Flint plans to head south and meet Heath again this Thursday night with another load. This time he may head for to the city of Ponchatoula, located about 30 miles north of New Orleans.

News staff reporter Geoff Larcom can be reached at (734) 994-6838 or glarcom@annarbornews.com.

MIRS
September 13, 2005

State Has Aging Workforce

Nearly two-thirds of the state's workforce are 45 years of age or older. Twenty-six percent of the state employees will eligible for retirement in five years. Sixty-percent will be retirement eligible in 10 years.

Those were the figures presented today to the Civil Service Commission by Deb **WIEBER**, director of the Department of Civil Service's Office of Human Resource Services.

Wieber provided the statistics during a presentation to the Commission on the department's efforts to a workforce planning program that would provide state departments with staffing needs, where staff is available to meet those needs and what recruitment and employee retraining needs might be required.

Wieber said development of the strategic workforce plan would “support the transfer of knowledge and experience in a well thought out manner, positioning the state to achieve maximum success.”

Civil Service Chairperson Susan **GRIMES-MUNSELL** told *MIRS* that even though the commission began looking into the workforce situation a couple of years ago, the figures presented today “took her by surprise.”

Grimes-Munsell said one of the positives in the information is that after a couple of incentive retirement plans, it tells us that people are still staying on and that state government in Michigan is a good place to work.”

U.N. vs. Poverty: Seeking a Focus, Quarreling Over the Vision

By CELIA W. DUGGER
The New York Times

Published: September 14, 2005

The United Nations General Assembly meeting today was to have been a rare moment when the quest to relieve the crushing poverty of a billion people took center stage. But so far that goal has been overshadowed by Katrina, the oil-for-food scandal and squabbling over reform of the United Nations itself.

Drought has expanded the desert in Niger. Easing such poverty is a topic at the United Nations this week.

Even the debate about the world's common agenda on global poverty began on an unexpectedly sour note, centered around the goals for healing the world's deepest poverty that were to be in the meeting's final document.

The American ambassador, John R. Bolton, initially proposed expunging any reference to specific goals for reducing poverty, hunger and child mortality and combating pandemics of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Known as the millennium development goals, they emerged from a United Nations conference five years ago. He favored instead citing the broad declaration from which the goals were drawn. The United States subsequently relented, but not before the administration's opening foray in the negotiations left some African leaders dismayed.

"The thing that shocked me personally was that they're trying to shift and change goal posts," said Charity Kaluki Ngilu, the Kenyan health minister, who is in New York for the meeting. "If this is the case, we African leaders might as well go home and find other methods of developing ourselves."

Mrs. Ngilu, who said she was stunned by the Bush administration's initial position, added that nonetheless, she credits Mr. Bush's anti-AIDS program with helping Kenya to increase the number of people being treated for the disease to 45,000, from 2,000.

Administration officials say Mr. Bush has a vision and a record to offer on development. But as of yesterday, with presidents and prime ministers from more than 170 nations converging on New York, he had yet to put his personal stamp on the debate.

He will undoubtedly address the challenges of fighting global poverty when he speaks today at the United Nations.

But some say he has missed an opportunity to take the lead on poverty - an issue of looming concern in much of the world - even when America itself is preoccupied by terrorism, the war in Iraq and the aftermath of the hurricane.

At the same time, negotiations at the United Nations got absorbed by the issues around United Nations reform.

"It's a failure of the tactical and policy process inside the administration, perhaps because of distractions," said Nancy Birdsall, the founding president of the Center for Global Development in Washington. "It suggests these development issues aren't that high on the agenda. The administration hasn't seized the moment."

Bush administration officials disagree. They say the United States is taking a strong lead. They noted that Laura Bush will be attending an event today in New York to highlight American support to African countries fighting malaria.

John A. Simon, senior director for development at the National Security Council, said the administration's priority had been the substance of the summit meeting, not perceptions.

Officials want to be sure that the final document reflects the president's view that development is about more than the amount of aid rich countries provide to poor ones, but also about good government, sound economic policies and private sector growth.

They also wanted to make it plain that the administration, while agreeing on the need for increased aid, has not and will not promise to give 70 cents of every \$100 of national income, as European nations have recently done, with timetables for achieving that level of aid.

"If we do the right things from a policy perspective, the results will speak for themselves," Mr. Simon said yesterday in an e-mail message.

But advocates of the target insist that the United States had already committed to moving toward it in 2002, when Mr. Bush supported a declaration at a summit meeting in Monterrey, Mexico, saying rich countries would "make concrete efforts" to give 0.7 percent of national income in aid. The United States, the world's largest donor in terms of value, is next to last among richer nations in giving as a share of national income.

In the current negotiations, Mr. Bolton first proposed dropping all references to the target, but later said it could be restored.

The administration's approach and the haggling over the final document contrasts with the way Prime Minister Tony Blair pushed his agenda to alleviate poverty in Africa before the July meeting of the Group of 8 major industrial nations.

Mr. Blair lobbied each leader beforehand. He collaborated with Sir Bob Geldof, the former Boomtown Rats singer, to build public support.

And when the terror bombings in London struck during the Group of 8 talks, Mr. Blair kept them focused on Africa.

He emerged with a commitment from the eight nations to double aid to Africa, to \$50 billion a year, by 2010.

It is not clear that much new will emerge at the United Nations. World leaders are likely to affirm their commitment to push forward with the millennium goals to halve extreme poverty and hunger, cut child mortality by two-thirds and ensure the basic education of each child by 2015, among other things.

Those are the same broad goals agreed to five years ago.

Whatever the verdict on Mr. Bush's role, others are seizing the initiative. Former president Bill Clinton will sponsor a three-day conference in New York beginning tomorrow that will focus on poverty and governing, climate change and conflict.

Among those listed as confirmed participants are Mr. Blair, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Sonia Gandhi, who leads the governing Congress Party in India.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, an economist who headed the United Nation's Millennium Project and is the author of "The End of Poverty," is developing a new organization called Millennium Promise to test his antipoverty ideas in 100 African villages. MTV will broadcast a documentary today, "The Diary of Angelina Jolie and Dr. Jeffrey Sachs in Africa," that recounts their trip to one such village in Kenya.

At a screening on Monday evening at the Museum of Television and Radio, Professor Sachs said of the coming United Nations meeting, "Maybe what we've got to do is lead by action, and the government will follow along." Ms. Jolie, looking every inch the movie star in a figure-hugging black dress, said, "Europe has stepped up, but America should take the lead, or at least more of a lead."

CAC the starting point for many

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

MIKE THOMPSON
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Lillie L. Williams didn't prepare statistics for two gatherings recognizing the Saginaw County Community Action Committee's 40th anniversary.

The agency director figures people who attend would rather hear anecdotes and general views about where the war on poverty stands in 2005, compared to its start in 1965.

"Many of our community leaders got their foundation or their start at CAC," Williams says.

"Myself, I was a single mother receiving assistance and going to school when I started here in 1977. My experience here is where I learned what the real issues are.

"I keep that in mind when the time comes to employ people here. We look for the potential. We give them skills to go into the community."

A free open house is from

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday at the center, 2824 Perkins. A banquet with \$25 tickets is at 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 22, at the Horizons Conference Center, 6200 State.

Robert L. Viera, the retired longtime director, is organizing the events.

Still at war

Williams worked her first dozen years under Omowale A. Smith as a community organizer with the Poverty Peoples Alliance, which no longer exists because of federal cuts. CAC staffers now do more handing out -- food commodities, payments to stop utility shutoffs -- than organizing. Smith, who started in 1969, is director of community services.

"We've been successful in getting people involved in their own problem-solving over the years.

We've been successful in getting people involved in community life. We've helped a lot of people become first-time homeowners," Smith says.

"We haven't eradicated poverty, but we've helped a number of people escape it."

Need doesn't stop

Still, Smith sees erosion of progress during the past quarter-century.

"The war on poverty was declared, but I don't think it was ever adequately financed or resourced," Smith says. "We were left to fight a war with inadequate resources, and we've done a hell of a job, I think.

"Now you hear people say that poverty will always be with us, so what have the poverty programs accomplished? That's like saying you'll always have illness, so why have hospitals? It's something we have to keep struggling with."

Poor with two jobs

Janie V. Martin started in the same year as Williams, 1977, and was raising four teenage children at the time. She was interim director and now heads weatherization and housing services. She says CAC made a difference not only for herself, but in helping her offspring make a transition to successful adult lives.

"We bring in people like myself at the start who don't have that confidence but who leave here with that confidence to go out and do things," Martin says.

"Education is more important than ever. When I was young, the General Motors jobs were so plentiful that people didn't have to worry about having an education then. The war on poverty is a different war now."

Williams agrees.

"The faces of poverty have changed," she says. "Now you have a lot of working people in poverty, even people working two jobs who are barely making ends meet. You have single mothers who are so exhausted by this that they don't have the energy to get involved (in community action). It has a snowball effect."

Practical assistance

To adapt to changing circumstances, CAC has focused more on individual help for the working poor.

Hundreds of household heads bring in their tax forms to ensure they receive maximum rebates from earned income tax credits. First-time home buyers receive financial counseling and advice about upkeep. A new effort this year, family self-sufficiency, will help families "see where they want to go and make a plan to get there."

For more information on the anniversary events, call the CAC at 753-7741.

Mike Thompson covers poverty issues for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9691.



Abrams, L. Annette Haslett, MI

On the morning of Tuesday, September 13, 2005, Annette transitioned from this world. Annette was born in Lansing on January 16, 1946. For the past 15 years Annette expressed her advocacy for families and children as the Director of University Partnerships Office of University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University.

Annette also served the families of the State of Michigan as the Director of Family and Children's Services under the Administration of Governor Blanchard.

Surviving are daughter and son, Samantha and Alex of Haslett, Michigan; mother, Esther Abrams of Atlanta, Georgia; sister, Roslyn of New York City; brother Dennis Abrams of Atlanta, Georgia; uncle and aunt, Marcus and Marjorie Metoyer of Lansing; cousin, James Morrow of Lansing; step-mother, Barb Abrams of Lansing; nieces, Denise Showers and Melissa Showers of New York; nephew, James D. Morrow of Ypsilanti, Michigan.

A gathering of family and friends will take place 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, September 15, 2005 at the Tiffany Funeral Home, 3232 W. Saginaw. Memorial contributions may be made to the Legacy Foundation in her name. As a family we pray for our departed Mother, Sister, and Friend. May you serve as well in all the world of God as you served in this one! Be at peace and you are loved. "The family is the workshop of civilization and includes all members of the human race." H. B. Danesh M.D.

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